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**KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Association Helps Resolve Land Issue

**USAID-supported water user associations are becoming a respected tool for resolving community problems.**



Representatives of the Shaidan Village rural council and the local water user association council discuss land distribution issues in Nookan Region, Jalalabat Oblast.

*"I didn't believe that a water user association would take care of my problem that has lasted for years. However, thanks to the association, my conflict with neighboring farmers has been resolved,"*

- farmer Salijan Saidinov.

Farmer Salijan Saibidinov owns land alongside an irrigation canal in Shaidan Village, Jalalabat Oblast (Province). Each spring, soon after the growing season has begun, Mr. Saibidinov's neighbors throw trash onto his field while cleaning debris from the canal. Mr. Saibidinov's land also floods when his neighbors over-water their fields. In turn, Mr. Saibidinov reduces the amount of water flowing from the canal, thus causing resentment among his neighbors. Pollution and flooding were affecting farmers' crop yields. Despite numerous complaints by Mr. Saibidinov and other farmers, local authorities did not provide any solution to the issue.

In a desperate attempt to resolve endless conflicts, a group of farmers, including Mr. Saibidinov, approached their local water user association *Shaidan-Kara-Ungur* for help. The 500-member strong *Shaidan-Kara-Ungur* is one of many water user associations in Kyrgyzstan that were created with assistance from the USAID-funded Water User Association Support Program, implemented by Winrock International.

The program teaches participant farmers to manage their water resources, distribute irrigation water to various stakeholders in a transparent and fair manner, and resolve conflicts related to water systems and land rights.

The association's newly elected council and Conflict Resolution Commission persuaded the village rural council to move some of the farmers' land away from the canal, thus providing more space for the canal clean-up work without encroaching on the farmers' fields. Now the farmers do not have to worry about flooding or debris polluting and destroying their crops and are able to achieve higher yields from their land. With more space for cleaning canals debris, clean-up efforts no longer cause tension among neighboring farmers.

"I didn't believe that a water user association would take care of my problem that has lasted for years. However, thanks to the association, my conflict with neighboring farmers has been resolved," says Salijan Saidinov.